
Dr. HOOPER's
SERMON
BEFORE THE
King & Queen,
At Whitehall, Jan. xiv. 1693.

LONDON
Printed by W. Stansfeld, at the Sign of the Crown, in St. Dunstons Church-yard.
MDCXCIII.

Dr. HOOBES

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Preach'd before the

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A T
W H I T E - H A L L,
January xiv. 169 $\frac{3}{4}$.

By *GEO. HOOPER*, Dean of *Canterbury*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their
MAJESTIES.

Publish'd by Their Majesties Command.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *Tho. Warren*, for *Walter Kettilby*, at the
Bishop's Head in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*,
MDCXCIV.

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By GEO. HODGKIN, Dean of Canterbury,
and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their
MAJESTIES.

Printed by J. Sturges, in Pall-mall.

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Printed by W. Waver, for W. & A. Knapton, at the
Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard.
MDCXCIV.

SERMON

Preach'd before the King and Queen.

JOHN vii. 17.

*If any one will do His will, he shall know of
the Doctrine, whether it be of God.*

UPON our Blessed Saviour's Appearance among men, there must have been much Inquiry and Dispute concerning Him. His Miracles and his Doctrines were both of them singular and extraordinary; they amazed and confounded the World: his mighty Works making a change in the course of Nature, and his surprising Discourses tending to as great an alteration in the Doctrines they had received from their Fathers and

Rabbies. Neither of them could be oppos'd ; his *Actions* not to be deny'd, and his *Words* not to be contradicted : and yet the People knew not well what to think ; were not come to a Resolution, whether he was to be believ'd ; whether he spake from God, or Himself, or it may be from an evil Spirit.

The People were *astonished at his Doctrine*, he spake it with that supernatural Authority. *Never man spake like this Man*, was the Return, the Officers sent to apprehend him, make, in this Chapter, to their Masters the High-Priest and Pharisees. Neither did any man ever do like him : for *when Christ shall come, will he do more miracles than this man?* was the Challenge of those that did believe. And that the rest believed not on him, who had done among them such works as no man had done, was judg'd by our Lord, in this Gospel, to be the great Aggravation of their Sin. For his Works were evident unexceptionable Testimonies of his Mission, and to them he frequently remits the *Unbelievers* for their full Conviction.

And yet, for all this, there were not many who believed on him ; those not the Rulers or the Learned : neither continued they long in that just and well-grounded Perswasion. Those who had seen his late great Miracle of the Loaves ; had fed of it, had satisfied their *Hunger* and their
Doubts,

Doubts; almost all left him, in a very little while, for one *hard Saying*. *Many of his Disciples went back, and walked not with him*, infomuch that the *Twelve* were asked, Whether they would depart from him also? And when afterwards he came up to *Jerusalem*, there was great murmuring concerning him. *Some say, he is a good man; some say, nay, but he deceiveth the people.* They knew not how he should know Letters, who had never learn'd; and therefore in the best construction they would make, Was not his Doctrine from himself, and of his own Devising? Now from the Reflection of these Surmises, he here justifies himself in such a manner, as retorts all the blame of those *Doubts* upon the *Unbelievers* themselves: giving them a plain account of this their Ignorance, which thus perplexes them. *My Doctrine*, says he, *is not my own, but from him that sent me*: and so much you could not but have known, had you been rightly qualified for it. But that after which you seem to be so curious and inquisitive, you are not very likely to understand, in the Method you take, and the Disposition you are of; if ye would discern the Will of God, ye must be willing to do it: *He that will*, is desirous and ready to, *do God's Will, he shall know it.* This is the Truth directly and primarily intended by the Text, relating

lating to the Doctrine as propounded to be known. There is too another Consequent to this, and to which the Words may extend; regarding the same Doctrine as known already: *If any one will or shall do the will of God*, which he now knows in part, *he shall know* it better and further; be more confirmed and advanced in that his Knowledge, by the Practice.

The first Proposition is this; *If any one is willing to do the Will of God, as soon as he may have the Favour to be acquainted with it; he, when it shall be told him, shall not fail to know, and discern it.* And this *Willingness to do*, we are to understand to be such, as may answer in some measure to the Dignity, Reasonableness, and Necessity of the Work; the *Doing the Will of the great God*: a *Will* the most wise, the most holy, the most just, most worthy to take place; to which it is our *Honour*, our *Perfection* and our *Happiness* to conform, and no less our *Duty* and our *Interest*: we that have been created by the *Power* of his *Almighty Will*, ever since sustained by its gracious *Providence*, still dependant, and eternally obnoxious to the *Favour* or *Displeasure* of his *final Will* to be hereafter declar'd, when he shall come to call us to account for that part of his Will he has already injoyn'd.

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The *Will* of this our great LORD, he that is thus willing *to do*, will first be as earnest and zealous *to know* ; diligent and heedful in his Attention ; punctual and exact in his Inquiries ; lest he should be defective or mistaken, when he comes to act, in an Affair of so high a Nature, and of such weighty Consequence.

And such a desire *to know*, it must be confess'd, would certainly follow : But this may not seem at first sight to have been meant here by our Saviour ; and though he reflects upon his Auditors Unwillingness *to do*, yet their Eagerness *to know* must we not suppose him to admit ? For very great Multitudes follow'd into Deserts to hear him : and much Discourse, and great Debates there were, concerning him and his Doctrine.

But notwithstanding all this Appearance of Willingness to hear and to be inform'd, there might have been no such great desire to know.

For Curiosity and Inquisitiveness is satisfied often with something short of Knowledge. It is enough sometimes to have went to the Place, whether others throng ; to have made up one of the Assembly, and to have seen the fam'd Preacher. Men too when they hear, do not always attend ; their Eyes gaze, and their Thoughts wander : Or if they do, it may be to the graceful Meen, the

sweet Voice, the elegant Style, the pathetick or the rational way of the Discourse, and not to the merit of the Argument, and purpose of the Doctrine.

Though they went not out into the wilderness to see a Reed shaken with the wind, yet they might go to see a Man that cur'd such a Neighbour; to be present at some strange fight themselves; to be able to report a Miracle of their own knowledge; or to be Guests at one of those wonderful Entertainments. Or else they might have went to hear one, who spar'd not the Greatest, who rebuk'd the High-Priests, and corrected the Scribes and Pharisees.

They might too have heard so much, as not to be ignorant, and yet not so much as to know; as much as would let them understand something of the Dispute in fashion, and enable them to maintain one side of the Argument; to hold up Conversation, and to talk of *Jesus*: but not to make a judgment in good earnest; a practical one, by which they would determine their Actions, and which they would stand by with their Lives: such a real effectual one, as they would have made, had they been willing to do.

· But though in the general, they might be willing to *know*, and not only *hear him gladly*, but
do

do many things for his sake ; yet many things still there might be, which they might be either unfit or unwilling to understand : either their former Prejudices might obstruct, or their Interests and Passions disturb and oppose ; if their will to do God's Will were not firm and resolute, strong enough to set aside those Hinderances, and over-rule all Contradictions.

The power of single Præpossession, and speculative Prejudice, is well known. An Opinion once possess'd of us claims a kind of Right, a legal Favour to be shewn it ; and if the Possession be ancient, and time out of mind, the Title is not easie to be evicted : But as a Prejudice, it is a Point already judg'd and settled, hardly to be brought into question before the same Judge, much less to be revers'd by him. And for such Reasons only, it might have been hard for an innocent Pharisee, to find the Ceremonies and Observations of his Sect disparag'd and discharg'd ; those which the great Rabbies had encouraged, and the Tradition of their Fore-fathers had recommended : but much less could he ever admit, that the Ceremonial Law of Moses was to give way, and that a Greater than Moses himself was now speaking unto them. He might be willing to do the Divine Will, as he now apprehended it to be, conformable to his Education

and *Practice*: willing to do the Will of God, but as willing, at the same time, to do the will of *Moses* and the *Elders*.

But if now we suppose this Pharisee to be some governing Master, whose Authority is founded in his Knowledge of those Traditions; and whose high satisfaction it is to sit in *Moses* his Seat, and to be called *Rabbi*: he is then so much addicted to them, not only by Præpossession of Mind, but by the Præingagement of his Affections, that should *Moses* himself have come, he might not have been willing to leave the Chair; much less to hear any of his old oracular Learning upon the Law, which made him Great, but that of no effect, censur'd and condemn'd by this *Law-giver*. For he is not so willing to do *God's Will*, as to preserve his own Place and Reputation; that we may not imagine he would be controll'd by our Saviour, and descend to learn from the *Galilean*, and one that never knew Letters.

But still if we go further, and understand some one of the avaritious, malicious, lewd and hypocritical Pharisees; as unwilling then as he would be to forego his Vices, so unwilling will he be to understand the Law against them; much more to receive a New one, which shall oppose him with a more express, and more peremptory Declaration.

And

And on this account it was, that all our Saviour's *Miracles* were not of force enough to convince them of his Authority: His single *Sermon on the Mount*, and the *Holiness* there prescrib'd, would never suffer them to be perswaded by him. The Pharisees that were covetous, derided him for his charitable Directions: and those who brought the Adulterers before him, and were not guiltless enough from the same Crime to prosecute it far, as they left the Accusation, so they fled from his Reproof. They all therefore sought instead of being instructed by his Words to have something thence to inform against him. As many Vices as there were, so many Adversaries there generally were to his Doctrine; practical Prejudices, with which they were præpossess'd, as with so many *Demons*; and which would not be perswaded, nor argued out: for what had they to do with the Son of *David*? This is that Diabolical Race, which paid him less respect than the Devils themselves; They would not come out at his Command: but rather treated Him, as those impure Spirits did the Sons of *Sceva*, *fell upon him, and drove him out*; not remov'd him out of a Country by Intreaty, as the *Gadarens*, but out of the World, with all Despight and Cruelty; as the greatest Malefactor of the *Three*; as guilty of *Treason* against *Cæsar*, and of *Blasphemy*.

Blasphemy against God, because guilty of Opposition to their Corruptions.

For he that has no mind to be deny'd any sinful Pleasure he indulges, or any ungodly Advantage he values, will be very averse from hearing, that such an Abstinence is the *Will of God*; will either cavil at the Message, and dispute its Authority, or wrest and interpret it to his own Will. Nay so far, we know, Men otherwise of good *Understandings*, may be brought by *Adherence* to their *Lusts*, as to deny the natural Notions of common Justice, and to question the being of their Maker: they will not comply with the Directions he has given; and therefore they will neither know his Pleasure, nor his Person: *who is the Lord?*

This is the *great Impediment of Knowledge* our Saviour here means; a *Dullness of Understanding*, not for want of *Ability*, but *Will* to apprehend; in those *who hear, and will not understand; and seeing see, but will not perceive; because their Heart is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes have they clos'd; lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and be converted.*

Whereas on the other side, if there were a *Willingness to do God's Will*, there would be no need of any great *Intellectual Abilities* to perceive it.

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The Duties of Justice and Mercy are easily discern'd by the meanest Capacity ; Judgment to come, Man naturally forebodes ; and the Being of a God, it is a Difficulty to the Understanding not to allow : The Doubts and Obscurities arise not from the Nature of the things to be consider'd, nor from the Weakness of the Faculty that should consider, but from the Prevarication of our sensual Desires ; we are sway'd by some indirect means, that appear not to have any Influence upon us ; some little favourite consideration, which we are loth to own ; but by which we are govern'd effectually.

Had the Auditors therefore of Christ come ready dispos'd to have obey'd God's Will, without any Reserve for their own ; with no Inclination nor Passion but for his Service ; they would have perceiv'd the Almighty Power in the Miracles our Saviour did, and discern'd the Divine Law in the Instructions he gave them : had they first stripped themselves of their Prejudices, and their Lusts ; they would quickly have forsaken all the rest of the World, and followed him. If the Revelation of *Moses* had prevailed upon them to do God's Will with their whole Heart, and whole Soul, the Nation of the *Jews* would have own'd their *Messiah* : and had they been true Disciples
of

of the Law, and followed that their *School-master* ; it would have led them to *Christ*.

This is the Assertion primarily intended by the Text, regarding those who were then to receive the Gospel: there remains the other, respecting us who have already received it; *If any one will do the Will of God, which he does know, he shall know it better.*

Now what was but intimated before, is here more expressly to be observed; that Knowledge is of two kinds, the one *simple*, and *speculative*; where the *Understanding* conceives and assents by it self, our Will and Affections standing by, and taking no part: the other *mixt*, and *compounded* by the intervention of the Will, where that is interested in what is to be asserted, or practised, and must concur in the Allowance of it.

And the *first* of these, even the *speculative*, whether it consists in apprehending what the *Doctrine* means, or in conceiving its Truth and Reasonableness, is by Practice both ways very much facilitated and confirmed. In *Mathematical Sciences*, the way of performing a *Problem*, however demonstratively assigned, remains further to be verified by the *Operation*; and in considerations of Nature, the Will of God wrought by his own hands, the
best

best method of *Knowledge* is that which is *Experimental*, and Works too ; which puts the *Divine Materials* into our hands, and looks not only upon their Surface in some single View, but turns them, and surveys them on all sides ; weighs and examines, opens and searches their inmost *Recesses*. For this sort of Truth, as Gold, is to be labour'd after, and dug for ; and not to be judg'd only by the Sight, but by the Touch and the Scale, or by the Hammer and the Fire. And if this be true in the *Speculation* of what God himself has been pleased to make, much more will it be in the Knowledge of that, which we, by his Command, are to Doe. For it can be no otherwise with the practical Doctrine of God, than it is acknowledged to be in the Arts and practical Professions of Men : where the true Insight is not so much from the Apprehensions we may have by Discourse and Meditation, as by Dealing in them, and being actually exercis'd and conversant about them : the knowledge of such things as are to be done, which arises from our mental Conceptions, being but as the rough Draught or first Lines of a Picture ; and that when it is consummated by experience, as a finish'd Piece, raised with all its Lineaments and Colours. Or rather the Notional Knowledge is as the Picture, and the Active as the Thing it self: the one being but

in Imagination, and as a Dream; and the other Real, and Solid, and Sensible. For whoever is our Instructor, and how plainly soever he may express himself; we are yet to learn in things practical, from *Exercise* and *Use*, the last Master and the best Interpreter.

This obtains in the Arts of Government, or War, or Merchandise, in any of the Affairs of this World: and holds as true in Ethical Knowledge, and the Business of Religion. For as the Natural Philosopher forbid the uninstructed in *Geometry* to enter his School; so the Moralist has, it is known, discouraged his too Youthful Auditors as unfit for his Lectures: not only because they might not yet patiently hear of Moderation of their Passions and Pleasure; but because, till they had begun to practise it, they could not rightly understand it, *not* being yet, *by reason of Use, exercis'd to discern such Good and Evil*. Temperance, for example, is in this, like to the Pleasures, from which it orders us to abstain, that it cannot be conceived only from Words, must be tasted too, if we would know its Nature and its Relish. Justice likewise and Charity are best understood by their Practitioners: those in any case of Difficulty would prove better Directors than the more studied Casuist; would solve and remove the
Doubts,

Doubts, which these would serve only to intricate and to multiply. They would too by the Exercise of those Vertues, see more reason for them; more of their Suitableness to the well-disposed Nature of Man, than Books could speak, or Theory discover. In like manner; He that constantly and devoutly prays to his *Maker*, best apprehends the Nature of the Duty, and best perceives the Use and Comfort of it: better than those who have heard, or made long Discourses about it. The Meaning of the *Lord's Prayer*, is more sensibly understood by one that prays it over to God, earnestly and concernedly, with Dependance on the *Divine Greatness* and *Goodness*, in reference to the *daily Occurrences* of his Life; than it can be by the critical Consideration of the best Commentator alone. And he that thus daily addresses to his *Father which is in Heaven*, with a *dutiful Resignation*, and *filial Trust*, has more of satisfactory Assurance and inward Peace, than the *Children of this World* can imagine, or he himself express.

And thus, taking the *Understanding* by it self, and unaffected with our *Will*, the *Will of God* is better known by being done. If done by others, it is more conspicuous to us on their Lives, and better explain'd and illustrated by the Example; but if by our selves, and made one of our own Acti-

ons, it is then taken into us, habituated and incorporated in us, intimately and intirely perceived. Whereas too all Humane Designs are generally fairer in the Idea, than the Practice; on the contrary, the *Divine Pleasure* must be more lik'd and approv'd, when it is reduced into Act, and really exhibited, who ever shall put it in Execution: but much more will it delight us, if perform'd by our selves; it will then become our Pleasure too, and we look back with the Satisfaction of our Creator, and *see that All is good*, which *we have done*, according to his Will.

But *secondly*, if we consider this Knowledge, not formed by the Understanding only, but with the agreement of the Will; as it is in all the Affairs of this and the other World: then Doing and Practice will be found still more necessary for the advancing and completing it. For though in Matters of Knowledge the Will has no direct proper Concurrence, nor is the Consent of it strictly necessary to the Assent of the Understanding; yet it has such a tacit but effectual Influence, such a domestick conjugal Authority, that the Understanding is seldom firmly or long on that side, to which the other Faculty is not inclined: and therefore as far as doing contributes to
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reconcile, keep up, and fortifie the Will ; so much it prepares and disposes for the preserving, as well as the receiving, of Knowledge.

Now the doing of *God's Will*, does operate on *ours*, with this threefold Advantage.

1. The *Practice* of the *Duty* takes off from the strangeness of it, and removes all the imaginary Difficulty we fancied to be in the Work, before we set upon it. The Task was before represented to us, as some good Man may be to those who have not practised him ; a rigid, morose, austere thing : whereas, after Conversation, and some Familiarity, there is nothing whose Company less offends, or which we better affect. While we keep off at a distance from the Exercises of Religion ; its Enemies, and ours, have a fair Opportunity to mis-represent, and to raise up such Imaginations in us as shall agree with their Interest : but if we would but approach, and make tryal, we should discover the Calumny ; it would then appear, that there was *no Lyon in the way*, or at the end ; and that the false Spies we had sent forth to discover the *Holy Land*, had made to us a most unfaithful Description. And may I not say, that is with Religion it self, as with those few *edifying Orders* in Use with us about it ? It is a burdensome Yoak, an intolerable Imposition, unnecessary, foolish,
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any thing that Detraction shall think fit to say, to those who are ignorant of it, and not well acquainted with it: whereas if we came a little nearer, and experienc'd it our selves, we should then begin to wonder at the unjust Surmises we were brought to entertain before; and take nothing to be more unreasonable, and more vain, than such Representations as those.

For to give the Case of all Christian Duties in the Instance of one, the *Holy Communion*; how many are they who are well enough inform'd, that it is a necessary part of *Divine Worship*; a *Sacrament* to which we are as much obliged, as we were to the other? And yet how are Men generally kept off from it by strange Conceits, such as can have no place, but in idle Minds? It is a Mystery, from which the *profane* and *ungodly* should absent: but to many, who are to be encouraged to come, it is the more a Mystery, because they come not at all. There is something in it, they know not what, they are afraid of: and the Action, instead of being Reverend, is Frightful to them. Upon the thought of it there is a Damp and Melancholy on their Minds; though the Subject of it be Thanks and Praise, and the Invitation be to a Feast. Though there be no more serious Confession of their Sins, than what they should make
every

every day ; no other Renunciation of them, than what their *Baptism* presumes already ; yet they imagine some new terrible Work is to be undertaken, and that they shall come under danger of Condemnation, if they go thither ; from which too they shall escape, if they stay away.

Upon the *first Apprehensions* of a God, no wonder if some natural fearfulness seizes us ; and when the spiritual World is mentioned, Spectres may arise in weaker Minds, and seem to stand in their way : but if they will but go on, these empty Shadows will immediately disappear ; and if we draw near to the *Divine Majesty*, we shall not be amaz'd and disheartened, but assured and encouraged by that Gracious Presence.

Many vain Fears there are in the Christian Warfare, before which often the Raw and Unexperient'd shamefully fly without a stroke struck, to be cured, as we see, by Use and Action : and some groundless Aversion there may be to our Duty, which the Practice of it will reconcile : but there is besides much real Danger, and direct actual Opposition, to be considered in the *second* place.

2. For to confess the *Truth* ; we are not only as *Strangers to the Will of God*, but there is something within us, which is an *Enemy to it, and wars*
against

against it : Rebellious Lusts, that would be willing to make a Resistance ; and watch all Opportunities, to withdraw the Obedience of the Will, and to corrupt the Integrity of the Judgment.

The Evidence of the *Truth* may have brought us to some Knowledge, and our *Carnal Affections* were forc'd at present to suffer the *Conviction* of the *Mind* : And had the well-inform'd Soul been *active* and *diligent*, setting the *Will* on work, and employing it upon its *acknowledged Duty*, subduing and suppressing the *contrary Inclinations* ; it might then have gained an *intire Consent*, and established for ever its *just Dominion*. But if, on the other side, it be idle, and sees not to the Execution of its *own* and the *Divine Pleasure* ; this is both a sure Indication, that our sensual part remains too powerful ; and a sad Prognostick, that it will quickly recover its ground ; and, finally prevail. When the *Convictions* begin to *cool*, and the *Impressions* on our *Mind* grow *fainter*, then it will regain its force ; undermine, and at last ruine, the *Knowledge* that had been rais'd : It will again captivate the *Understanding*, and, like a barbarous Conquerour, put out its Eyes.

The very *Omission* of our *Duty* impairs its *Knowledge*. It is as a *Sleep* of the *Soul*, and under its Truce our *Carnal Desires* refresh and gather strength : there

is too a cessation of Sense, as well as of Motion ; a present Forgetfulness of God, and temporary Ignorance of his Will. But if we are thence ingag'd into Actual Transgression, we then avowedly contradict his Precepts, and make open War against his *Sacred Truths* ; destroying, as far as we can, all the Records of them, and breaking not only the *Commandments* , but the *Tables* themselves. The Knowledge of them is troublesome and opposing, and must be suppress'd.

By *Doing* of any *Wickedness* a Blot is contracted ; which not only blemishes the Soul, but blackens and darkens it : And a contrary Course of Repentance afterwards, is not more necessary to atone for the Guilt, than it is to change the Depravation of the Mind, and to recover and re-establish its former Sentiments. For as there are some Vices, which naturally affect the Head, rendring it unfit to think and recollect, and disabling it for any Science : so have All of them something of that stupifying Nature, particularly indisposing for *Divine Knowledge* ; sending up such Fumes, as by a peculiar Malignancy assault and poison all Notions of *Goodness* and *Vertue*, and mortifie the *Spiritual Understanding*.

The *Knowledge* of our *Duty*, is as a *Light* set up within us, to be maintain'd by constant Supplies,

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and in perpetual Motion. It may be obscur'd by the shining in of the World, through our Senses and Imagination: it may be suffocated, if only by the Damp, arising from an earthy and yet not well purg'd Breast; grow pale and dim, and then go out: but by the active Contrariety of wicked and ungodly Practices, it is certainly extinguish'd, drown'd as by many Waters.

So necessary is the *Exercise* of our *Knowledge*, to its *Preservation*. But then further,

3. By *Doing of the Will of God*, at length we attain to the Habit of *Doing it willingly*; and begin to have new Pleasure in the Discharge of our Duty. According as our *Carnal Affections* are suppressed, our *Spiritual Desires* arise; and upon the *Mortification* of the *Old Man*, the *New Man* grows up, and improves: the Consent of the *Sanctified Will*, being at last utterly and absolutely given to the Assent of the *Understanding*; and we not only allowing the *Doctrine of God*, to be true and reasonable in the speculation, but imbracing it with our whole heart, and intirely affectionate to it: proceeding so to the *Knowledge* of one farther *Truth*, deliver'd us by our Saviour, and experimentally discovering, that *His Yoke is easie, and Burthen light*; that *His Paths are Paths of Pleasure and Peace*. This is the *Seraphick State* of *Holy Men*, who now believe not only what they have

have heard, but perceive and know what their *Eyes have seen*, and their *Hands have handled*, and their *Souls have enjoyed*, of the *Word of Life*. Then from the Heart, continuing its first Motion, and actuated with *Devotion* and *Zeal*, fresh supplies of *Spirits* are sent back again to the Head; the Warmth of the *Breast* is inkindled into a *Flame*; and *New Light* springing up from that *Holy Heat*, the upper *Sphære* of Man, like *Heaven*, is full of *Brightness* and *Joy*.

In this manner, the *Knowledge of God's Will* is to be improv'd by us; It comes by *Hearing*, and may be imagined by *Meditation*; but it really increases, strengthens, and is fix'd, by *Actions of Obedience*, and reducing it into *Practice*.

It is not therefore to be wonder'd, That such as doe not *those things which are convenient*, become of *Reprobate Minds*: and that they lose the *Knowledge of God*, who like not to retain it. Neither shall we admire, if there are those who are in appearance *always learning*, but never come to the *Knowledge of Christ*. Their *Ears* itch, and they heap up to themselves *Teachers*; but their *Hands* are idle, their *Feet* are straying, and their *Souls* have no *Inclination* to try, and to obey. They have heard much, and some *Fancy* of their *Duty* they may have, or may speak its *Language*; they have

wrote it may be, and can repeat : but the Repetition of all *moral Discourses* should be by *Præfice*, and they transcribed into our *Conversation*. They edifie not, they say, by this Man's Sermon : and by the *Knowledge*, from which they think they are edified, they may not be built, but *puffed up*. But how should they edifie, who sit still only and hear ? Faith being no more to be built up and finish'd by Preaching, than a House would be erected by the Discourse of the best Architect. Much less should we expect a Superstructure, if, as in the Confusion of a *Babel*, their *Actions* agreed not with the *Speech* ; and what was endeavoured to be raised at the *Ear*, they, with the *foolish Woman*, were still *pulling down with their hands*.

But this is to be the *Consolation* of the *illiterate*, if honest-hearted, *Christian* ; that although there be those that appear more knowing, are skill'd in the *Notions* and *History* of *God's Will*, can give an account of all the *Disputes* of *Christianity*, and can determine them ; yet that all this is but smattering and learned *Ignorance*, without any true *Sense*, and sound *Judgment* ; that those only are in the right *Method* of *Divine Knowledge*, who are *obeying God*, and *observing his Will* ; they are the *Profound* and the *Illuminate* ; and *know the Doctrine* as it ought to be known : their *Light* now *shines before*

fore men ; and they shall shine as Stars for ever and ever.

And may I further observe, that the *Reflection* of our *Saviour*, which gives an account of that *contradiction* which opposes his *Doctrine*, gives too a reason of all the *Differences* and *Debates* that have been raised in it. For these would infallibly be much less, if not quite cease, were those, who *eagerly dispute his Will*, as *zealous* and *earnest* to *perform it* : were not Men more warmly concerned for the *Honour* and *Interest* of their *Party*, or *themselves* ; than they are *really desirous* to understand the *Mind of Christ*. For if any one truly gives himself up to *do his Will* ; he will not be apt to enter into needless *Contests*, about what is not *practical* ; nor strive most to *know*, what is not to be *done* : And then when he comes to the *Question*, so much of his *Lord's Will* he will at first observe, as to be *modest*, and *meek*, and *tractable* ; not suffer his *Passions* and *Animosities* to join in the *Enquiry* : he will not bring so much as a *Wish* on one part, much less shall any *humane Pre-ingagements* decide the *Controversie*. And if so, one cannot but think, (and sure we are not in this *partial* our selves) that the *Papal Infallibility*, for Example, and their *Transubstantiation* would be no longer defended, nor their *gross Falshoods* be set up for *Catholick Truths* : Neither,

ther, on the other side, would ancient *Laudable Practices* be any longer *Idolatrous* and *Antichristian*. Were we not *carnal*, and *walked* we not as *Men*, favouring our selves, and doing our own Will; there might be neither *Hereſie* nor *Schiſm*; did we resign our selves up to the *Truth*, on which side soever it should appear. And certainly the *Sacredneſſ* and *Moment* of the Cause, where *God's Will* is in question, would require such a Caution, as, in lesser Matters, is inforc'd by an *Oath*; that we should judge without *Favour* and *Affection*, *Hatred* and *Malice*; that those at least who take upon themselves to judge of his *Law*, should judge *righteous Judgment*. For what is fit to be said after any Accident that befalls us by the *Providence* of God, is as proper to be premis'd before a *Dispute* concerning his *Revelation*: *Thy will be done, O Father, which art in Heaven*. And were our part of it *done on Earth as it is in Heaven*, it might almost be known in the same manner.

Happy it would be for the *Arts*, said an *Ancient*, if none but the *Skilful* and the *Artists* judg'd of them: and no less happy would it be for *Religion*, if only the *truly religious*, and the *sincere Christian*, were to determine the *Points in Difference*. This Advantage would undoubtedly result,
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that the *Disputers* would not be very many; as well as that the *Disputes* would be no more than necessary; fairly debated, and soon composed. Whereas now all *Religious Controversies* are managed like *Wars* for *Religion*; rais'd, and fought not always by the most *Religious Men*. The Question is concerning some *Point of Faith* or *Manners*; and should be argued by *Godly Spirits*: But the *World* and the *Flesh*, they come in and intermeddle; and they are as *Auxiliaries* on either side, whose Interest it is the *Cause* should never be decided. For were not *Christianity* divided, what *Enemy* would it have but those its sworn *Enemies*, against whom it had declar'd in *Baptism*? And against these it would then join its *United Force* in a *Holy League*, and never cease until they were intirely subdued.

In these many *Differences* of thinking, concerning our *Saviour's* Person, and Pleasure, we piously hope, that he will mercifully consider the Infirmities and Errors of Men, and accept the Services of the Well-meaning; pardoning their Ignorance and want of Discernment, if not too careless and too wilful. But lest we betray ourselves and others into a further Mistake, we shall do well to take along with us this his *Observati-*

on; and remember that generally all our Ignorance is wilful, for want of Will to *do God's Will*. And when Ignorance shall come to be pleaded, *in the day when He shall judge the secrets of mens hearts*, it may then amount to no better an Excuse, than if instead of saying, we did not Know his Will; we should alledge in our *Justification*, that we were not willing to Doe it. Through our *humane Infirmary*, we did mistake in the *Duties* of our *Religion*: but our Infirmary was this, That we were unwilling to obey. A much more absurd return, than the *careless Servant* made in the *Parable* of the *Talents*: Lord, I knew that thou wert a hard Master, and didst expect Obedience at my hands; and therefore I would not understand thee.

But it is not our Duty only, to inquire the *Will of God*; it is our Priviledge and Honour, to be able to understand it. Its Study is the noblest Exercise, and its Attainment the highest Ambition of a Rational Mind: the Knowledge so great a Favour, that we should have endeavoured after it at any price; Should have bought that Learning with the expence of our Liberty; And to be permitted to Understand, should have offered to Obey. That way the generous Appetite of Science,
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should have mov'd in an Intelligent Creature ; nor has God, in his ordinary method; vouchsafed to reveal himself to Man, on any other Condition. His Disciples are to be his vow'd Servants : to such only will he appear, and certainly with no other will he dwell. Ever since the first ungrateful Attempt to Know his Will, by Transgressing it; a Readiness to obey, has been made the Preparative to that Knowledge; and Obedience, the Preservative: the very *Nature* of his *Doctrine* requiring in us some Prædisposition, a probationary Obsequiousness, without which it will not be imparted ; and God having done it that Honour, as that the *Unworthy* should of themselves be render'd *Unqualified* and *Uncapable*, justly præcondemn'd to this Darkness now, to whom *is reserved the blackness of Darkness for ever*. For to the *Ungodly*, says God, *What hast thou to do with my Law, seeing thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my Words behind thee ?* Be thou ignorant as thou art, as thou pretendest, or deserveest to be ; and await the Issue. For a Desire to Know, while we care not to Doe, is such an impertinent, saucy Curiosity, as can never be gratified by our Lord : and not to Doe, what we already Know,

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is so highly affronting, that there remains no bolder a Presumption, but to pretend to further Information ; nor can a lesser Punishment, for the Abuse of this Knowledge, be expected, than its Forfeiture.

The Doctrine of God, however it may be esteemed by Men, is valued by the Author ; a *Talent*, committed to the Hopeful only, and the Promising ; nor to any, but upon Account. If we put it to no Use, it will, of its own Nature, rust and diminish ; may be lost through Negligence, or stoln by our Enemy, or taken away by the Great Owner. But, if we exercise and employ it, it will encrease and multiply, of it self and by the natural Effect of our Industry ; and will besides be wonderfully bless'd and augmented by the Special Favour of our Lord : who is gone indeed into a *far Country*, but so, as still to oversee, assist, and direct, the honest Care and dutiful Labour of his Servants below.

For, to our assured Encouragement, the miraculous Power, that first openly introduced the Christian Doctrine, still invisibly attends it ; to
cherish,

cherish, as heretofore, the willing Beginning of its Disciples, and to help on their obedient Endeavours. And this *Will*, whoever *will Doe*, not only *will Know* it in orderly Consequence; but he *shall Know* it, supernaturally enabled by *Divine Grace*: our Performance as certainly rewarded here, with a progressive Knowledge; as it shall be hereafter, with the Joys of our Master, and his Immediate Beatifick Vision.

F I N I S.
